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11-16-2000

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University Marketing and Communications, "11/16/2000 - Statement On Complaint Filed By Teshome Abebe.pdf" (2000). 2000. 237.  
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00-244

Nov. 16, 2000

**Statement on Complaint Filed by Teshome Abebe**

“Eastern Illinois University officials are reviewing a complaint filed Nov. 14 in U.S. District Court in Urbana against the university and its president alleging discrimination on the basis of race, religion and sex by former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Teshome Abebe,” said Eastern spokeswoman Shelly Flock.

“The university vehemently denies the allegations made in the complaint,” Flock said.

Eastern President Carol Surles said, “I am shocked that anyone, especially a former administrator who has held a position of trust, would unashamedly fabricate conversations and incidents that never occurred. There is not a scintilla of truth in Dr. Abebe’s allegations.”

Flock said Abebe filed a charge that was being investigated by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR). Before the IDHR could complete its investigation, Abebe requested a “right to sue” letter from the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Neither the IDHR nor the EEOC has made a judgment on the merits of the charge that was filed.

When it became aware of allegations against the president, the Board of Trustees approved the hiring of an outside investigator in May, Flock said. After reviewing the report from the investigator and affidavits from key witnesses, at its Sept. 19 meeting, the board found, “That following a thorough investigation, the allegations are unfounded.”

Surles said Abebe was removed from his post for performance reasons and had never raised

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complaints of discrimination to anyone at the university prior to being notified that he was being removed from his position. "I investigated a number of concerns raised about Dr. Abebe's performance and concluded that he could not be effective in his position. As a result, I asked him to step down as provost," Surles commented.

Surles noted that individuals in high level administrative positions serve in those capacities at the pleasure of the president.

Since Abebe was granted tenure in the Department of Economics when he was hired as provost and vice president of academic affairs, he was reassigned to his tenured position with a salary commensurate with his faculty duties.